Amendments to the Claims

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims:

1. **(twice amended)** A method for parallel approval of an electronic document by a plurality of users, comprising the steps of:

A) generating an original Data Authentication Code, hereinafter referred to as "DAC 0", linked to the electronic document;

B) making the electronic document available to each user of said plurality of users; and

C) having each user of said plurality of users parallelly approve said electronic document, by ~~for approval by each user,~~ performing the sub-steps of:

i) opening the electronic document for approval;

ii) retrieving DAC 0;

iii) said user approving the electronic document by generating approval information;

iv) generating for the electronic document an approval Data Authentication Code, hereinafter referred to as "DAC x";

v) comparing DAC x to DAC 0, and proceeding with the approval only if DAC x is equal to DAC 0; and

vi) storing said approval information in a user Approval Data Packet, hereinafter referred to as "ADP x".

2. **(original)** The method of claim 1, further comprising an additional step of:

D) incorporating the approval information from each ADP x into the electronic document.

3. **(original)** The method of claim 2, wherein step D) comprises the sub-steps of:

i) copying the electronic document into an insertion electronic document;

ii) retrieving DAC 0; and

iii) for each ADP x, performing the sub-steps of:

a) opening ADP x;

b) retrieving DAC x;

c) comparing DAC x to DAC 0, and proceeding only if DAC x is equal to DAC 0;

d) inserting approval information stored in ADP x into the insertion electronic document; and

e) generating a new Data Authentication Code, hereinafter referred to as "DAC 0' ", linked to the insertion electronic document.

4. **(original)** The method of claim 3, wherein sub-step D) iii) d) comprises including the approval information at a pre-targeted location in the insertion electronic document.

5. **(original)** The method of claim 2, wherein step D) comprises the sub-steps of:

i) opening the electronic document;

ii) for each ADP x, performing the sub-steps of:

a) opening ADP x;

b) inserting approval information stored in ADP x into the electronic document, thereby generating a modified electronic document ; and

c) generating a new Data Authentication Code, hereinafter referred to as "DAC 0' ", linked to the modified electronic document.

6. **(original)** The method of claim 5, wherein the inserting of sub-step D) iii) d) comprises including the approval information at a pre-targeted location in the electronic document.

7. **(original)** The method of claim 1, wherein sub-step C) vi) comprises encrypting ADP x.

8. **(original)** The method of claim 1, wherein step A) comprises encrypting DAC 0.

9. **(currently amended)** The method of claim 1, wherein~~, in~~ substep C) vi)~~, the approval information comprises DAC x~~ comprises storing DAC x in ADP x.

10. **(currently amended)** The method of claim 1, wherein, in substep C) ~~vi)~~ iii), the approval information comprises a signature of the user.

11. **(currently amended)** The method of claim 1, wherein, in substep C) ~~vi)~~ iii), the approval information comprises biometric information related to the user.

12. **(currently amended)** The method of claim 1, wherein, in substep C) ~~vi)~~ iii),, the approval information comprises a date and a time at which substep C) iii) was executed.

13. **(twice amended)** A method for parallel approval of an electronic document by a plurality of users, comprising the steps of:

A) generating an original Data Authentication Code, hereinafter referred to as "DAC 0", linked to the electronic document;

B) making the electronic document available to each user of said plurality of users;

C) ~~for approval by each user,~~ having each user of said plurality of users parallelly approve said electronic document, by performing the substeps of:

i) opening the electronic document for approval;

ii) each user approving the electronic document by generating approval information;

iii) generating for the electronic document an approval Data Authentication Code, hereinafter referred to as "DAC x";

iv) storing said approval information in a user Approval Data Packet, hereinafter referred to as "ADP x"; and

D) ~~for~~ authenticating the approval by each user, by performing for each DAC x the sub-steps of:

i) retrieving DAC 0 and DAC x; and

ii) comparing DAC x to DAC 0, and accepting the approval only if DAC x is equal to DAC 0.

14. **(original)** The method of claim 13, further comprising the steps of:

E) inserting approval information stored in ADP x for each user into the electronic document, thereby generating a modified electronic document ; and

F) generating a new Data Authentication Code, hereinafter referred to as "DAC 0'", linked to the modified electronic document.

15. **(original)** The method of claim 13, wherein sub-step C) iv) comprises encrypting ADP x.

16. **(original)** The method of claim 13, wherein step A) comprises encrypting DAC 0.

17. **(currently amended)** The method of claim 13, wherein~~, in~~ sub-step C) iv)~~, the approval information comprises DAC x~~ comprises storing DAC x in ADP x.

18. **(original)** The method of claim 13, wherein, in sub-step C) iv), the approval information comprises a signature of the user.

19. **(original)** The method of claim 13, wherein, in sub-step C) iv), the approval information comprises biometric information related to the user.

20. **(currently amended)** The method of claim 13, wherein, in sub-step C) ~~iv)~~ ii), the approval information comprises a date and a time at which sub-step C) ii) was executed.

21. **(twice amended)** A method for parallel approval of sections of an electronic document by a plurality of users, the method comprising the steps of:

A) generating for each section of the electronic document an original section Data Authentication Code, hereinafter referred to as "DAC_S 0", linked to said section of the electronic document;

B) making the electronic document available to each user of said plurality of users; and

C) ~~for approval by each user of~~ having each user of said plurality of users parallelly approve corresponding sections of the electronic document, by performing the sub-steps of:

i) opening the electronic document for approval;

ii) selecting the corresponding sections for approval;

iii) retrieving each of the DAC_s 0 linked to the corresponding sections of the electronic document;

iv) each user approving the corresponding sections of the electronic document by generating approval information;

v) generating for each corresponding sections a section approval Data Authentication Code, hereinafter referred to as "DAC_s x";

vi) comparing the DAC_s x to the corresponding DAC_s 0, and proceeding with the approval only if in each case DAC_s x is equal to DAC_s 0; and

vii) storing said approval information in a user Approval Data Packet, hereinafter referred to as "ADPx".

22. **(original)** The method of claim 21, further comprising an additional step of: D) incorporating the approval information from each ADP x into the electronic document.

23. **(original)** The method of claim 22, wherein step D) comprises, for each ADP x, performing the sub-steps of:

i) opening the ADP x

ii) selecting and opening a target section of the electronic document wherein the approval information is to be inserted;

iii) retrieving the DAC_s 0 and DAC_s x corresponding to said target section;

iv) comparing DAC_s x to DAC_s 0, and proceeding only if DAC_s x is equal to DAC_s 0;

v) inserting approval information stored in ADP x into the target section of the electronic document, thereby generating a modified section of the electronic document ; and

vi) generating a new section Data Authentication Code, hereinafter referred to as "DAC_s 0", linked to the modified electronic document.

24. **(original)** The method of claim 23, wherein the inserting of sub-step D) v) comprises including the approval information at a pre-targeted location in the target section of the electronic document.

25. **(original)** The method of claim 22, wherein step D) comprises, for each ADP x, performing the sub-steps of:

i) opening the ADP x

ii) selecting and opening a target section of the electronic document wherein the approval information is to be inserted;

iii) inserting approval information stored in ADP x into the target section of the electronic document, thereby generating a modified section of the electronic document; and

iv) generating a new section Data Authentication Code, hereinafter referred to as "DAC_s 0", linked to the modified electronic document.

26. **(original)** The method of claim 25, wherein the inserting of sub-step D) iii) comprises including the approval information at a pre-targeted location in the target section of the electronic document.

27. **(original)** The method of claim 21, wherein sub-step C) vii) comprises encrypting ADP x.

28. **(original)** The method of claim 21, wherein step A) comprises encrypting each DAC_s 0.

29. **(currently amended)** The method of claim 21, wherein~~, in~~ sub-step C) vii)~~, the approval information comprises DAC_s x~~ comprises storing DAC_s x in ADP x.

30. **(currently amended)** The method of claim 21, wherein, in sub-step C) ~~vii)~~ iv), the approval information comprises a signature of the user.

31. **(currently amended)** The method of claim 21, wherein, in sub-step C) ~~vii)~~ iv), the approval information comprises biometric information related to the user.

32. **(currently amended)** The method of claim 21, wherein, in sub-step C) ~~vii)~~ iv), the approval information comprises a date and a time at which sub-step C) iv) was executed.

33. **(twice amended)** A method for parallel approval of sections of an electronic document by a plurality of users, each section being approved by a single user, the method comprising the steps of:

A) making the electronic document available to each user of said plurality of users; and

B) ~~for approval by each user of~~ having each user of said plurality of users parallelly approve a corresponding section of the electronic document, by performing the sub-steps of:

i) opening the electronic document for approval;

ii) selecting the corresponding section for approval;

iii) each user approving the corresponding section of the electronic document by generating approval information;

iv) generating for the corresponding section a section approval Data Authentication Code, hereinafter referred to as "DAC_s x";

v) storing said approval information in a user Approval Data Packet, hereinafter referred to as "ADP x".

34. **(original)** The method of claim 33, wherein sub-step B) v) comprises encrypting ADP x.

35. **(original)** The method of claim 33, wherein sub-step B) iv) comprises encrypting DAC_s x.

36. **(currently amended)** The method of claim 33, wherein~~, in~~ sub-step B) v)~~, the approval information comprises DAC_s x~~ comprises storing DAC_s x in ADP x.

37. **(currently amended)** The method of claim 33, wherein, in sub-step B) ~~v)~~ iii), the approval information comprises a signature of the user.

38. **(currently amended)** The method of claim 33, wherein, in sub-step B) ~~v)~~ iii), the approval information comprises biometric information related to the user.

39. **(currently amended)** The method of claim 33, wherein, in sub-step B) ~~v)~~ iii), the approval information comprises a date and a time at which sub-step B) iii) was executed.

40. **(thrice amended)** A method of merging a plurality of approved electronic documents or sections of a document into a single approved master document, the method comprising the steps of:

A) approving the electronic documents by performing, for each of said electronic documents, the sub-steps of:

i) generating an original Data Authentication Code, hereinafter referred to as "DAC 0", linked to the electronic document;

ii) having the electronic document made available to each user of a plurality of users;

iii) ~~for approval by each user,~~ having said each user of a plurality of users approve said electronic document by performing the sub-steps of:

a) opening the electronic document for approval;

b) each user approving the electronic document by generating approval information;

c) generating for the electronic document an approval Data Authentication Code, hereinafter referred to as "DAC x";

d) storing approval information in a user Approval Data Packet, hereinafter referred to as "ADP x";

B) generating the master document;

C) generating a master Data Authentication Code and a master Approval Data Packet, respectively hereinafter referred to as "DACm 0", and ADPm, both linked to said master document; and

D) for merging of each electronic document, performing the sub-steps of:

i) opening the electronic document;

ii) retrieving the DAC 0 and DAC x linked to said electronic document;

iii) comparing DAC x to DAC 0, and proceeding only if DAC x is equal to DAC 0; and

iv) incorporating the electronic document into the master document;

v) generating a new Data Authentication Code, hereinafter referred to as "DACm 0" linked to the master document incorporating said electronic document; and

vi) storing ADP x corresponding to said electronic document into ADPm.

41. **(original)** The method of claim 40, wherein:

sub-step A) iii) c) comprises encrypting ADP x; and

step C) comprises encrypting ADPm.

42. **(original)** The method of claim 40, wherein:

sub-step A) i) comprises encrypting DAC 0; and

step C) comprises encrypting DACm 0.

43. **(currently amended)** The method of claim 40, wherein~~, in~~ sub-step A) iii) d)~~, the approval information comprises DAC x~~ comprises storing DAC x in ADP x.

44. **(currently amended)** The method of claim 40, wherein, in sub-step A) iii) ~~d~~b), the approval information comprises a signature of the user.

45. **(currently amended)** The method of claim 40, wherein, in sub-step A) iii) ~~d~~b), the approval information comprises biometric information related to the user.

46. **(currently amended)** The method of claim 40, wherein, in sub-step A) iii) ~~d~~b), the approval information comprises a date and a time at which sub-step A) iii) b) was executed.